

## 2. The Question of Direct Action: Action in the Economic Realm

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As evidenced in the preceding chapter dealing with the historical development of the syndicalist movement, the most compelling characteristic of revolutionary syndicalism, and that which sets it apart from political socialism, was its advocacy of direct action. Not through parliamentary proceedings and the sheer weight of electoral numbers would the worker realize emancipation, syndicalists preached. Rather, this liberation could only occur through individual and collective action carried out in the economic realm.

As defined by syndicalists, direct action came to include a host of activities, ranging from union membership, to the use of sabotage, to participation in cooperatives and strikes--particularly the general strike. This definition of direct action resulted in the development of an ideology designed to attract militants of every philosophical stripe, from Proudhonists to Marxists. Direct action was a way to build union membership by pressing for labor reform and by offering the means, both large and small, by which workers could carry out a revolutionary act. The theory and practice of direct action, therefore, served as a vehicle for welding together disparate groups of militants and workers, thereby heightening the development of class consciousness. The idea of direct action was also a practical response to contemporary conditions: an unstable parliamentary structure, a labor force in the process of change, a revolutionary tradition that elevated the ideal of a highly centralized state, and a leftist movement continually torn apart by organizational schism.

Given such prosaic means and ends, why has there been so much misunderstanding and criticism by past and present observers of syndicalism's emphasis on direct action? To many critics direct action was narrowly synonymous with a coup de main or terror by the deed. To syndicalists, however, direct action was any action carried on by the worker against the bourgeois state or capitalist profits. The social revolution would be thoroughgoing and cataclysmic in the change produced. But the primary message of syndicalism was that revolution would be achieved



incrementally, with partial expropriation leading inexorably to total expropriation.

#### AN APPEAL TO ALL PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS

One of the most obvious ways to work for revolution was to entice the timid masses to join the unions. The benefits to be derived from association fill the literature. The union is defined as a shelter, a legal entity, and the natural aspiration of mankind. Also popular is the theme that direct action is a natural and ethical act, sanctioned by history, and the only effective means to integral emancipation.

The naturalness of direct action and of association was a constant theme. Emile Pouget noted that because unions were spontaneous groupings organized on the economic terrain, workers could realize within the syndical fold a sense of identity transcending philosophy, politics, or religion. The syndicat was "the school of the will," he asserted, "wherein the individual lost nothing of his personality as he did in the democratic milieu." (1) Birds and animals recognized "the need to organize in order to face the exigencies of life," declared shoemaker Henri Dret at the regional meeting of the Auxerre bourse in 1907. Workers needed to do the same. In association they would become more than a collection of individuals. The syndicat was not merely "Pierre, Louis, or Jacques separately," concluded Dret, "but Pierre, Louis, Jacques . . . all together." (2)

Rather than being a mere bastion, a static doctrine, or an entity constructed for the moment, the union, syndicalists constantly proclaimed, was a living, evolving organism moving outside the temporal domain. Unionism was not a dogma nor a party doctrine, stated socialist historian Paul Louis; it was "socialism in action" and the only truly dynamic means by which society could be transformed. (3) Unionism was a momentous force, "forms of energy," according to Monsieur Larrivière of the lithographers' union in a 1901 article. Such energy, he contended, was strong enough to combat "the inertia which comes from egoism." (4)

In addition to being living energy, syndicalism also transcended time. Emile Pouget concluded that the union was "the organic cell of society," constituting "a double blow: present and future." (5) Workers at the 1900 congress of the CGT agreed on the organic character of unionism and concurred with the assessment of Joseph Braun of the metallurgy union. Future society could only be organized by the syndicats, he asserted, because these associations were "the embryos of future social organization." (6)

The rhetoric urging workers to direct action through syndicalism was designed to compress individual men and women into a new class: vital, dynamic, capturing within itself past and future. Propaganda was phrased in such a



way as to appeal to the artisanal elite, who believed in the superiority of their position in society and in the work force. But the message was also intended to instill in the unskilled worker a sense of community and a feeling that he and his comrades had been tagged by destiny to be the new heroes of the world. Syndicalist propaganda was also realistically contrived to appeal to workers of every philosophical hue.

The educational value of syndicalism was lauded, thereby casting its appeal to those attracted by the works of Auguste Comte. Writing in Le Libertaire in 1903, Georges Yvetot reminded his readers that it was in the unions and bourses that workers could realize the benefits of association by first airing their grievances, and then studying the means to equalize the conditions of each individual to the betterment of all.(7) In a little book of "opinions," militant anarchist Dr. Marc Pierrot praised the educational aspect of syndicalism. Through propaganda the exploited worker would "arrive at the exact knowledge of [his] misery and servitude." This enlightenment would not be imposed from above, however. In the unions, anarchist Pierrot declared, "education is accomplished by example and by contagion."(8)

The emphasis on the educational aspects of direct action was favored by the more cautious elements within the working class. But syndicalist propaganda was also designed to appeal to the radicals, such as the followers of Blanqui, who were impatient with empirical and reasoned approaches to improving the conditions of the working class. Blanqui's doctrine of revolution held that a small, well-trained cadre would carry out a violent coup de main that would be the revolution. Many syndicalists espoused this line in their apparent preference for audacious minorities over large masses of unionized workers. Certainly one might conclude that this expressed preference for a small revolutionary elite was only a case of making a virtue of necessity. To a large degree this was true. As previously noted, union membership was always small relative to the work force in France. Nevertheless, early syndicalist literature is replete with praise for the superiority of small numbers in the work of revolution.(9)

In his history of the bourses du travail, Fernand Pelloutier warned that if the number of union members grew too large, syndicalism would become "pacific and legal and would violently resist any attempts at coup d'état."(10) The equation of passivity with numbers was also voiced by Blanquist Eugène Guérard of the railroad workers' union in 1901. Jaurès' view that the revolution must be the work of a majority was illusory, since the majority is always inert. We are governed by a minority, Guérard noted; capable leaders are always a minority. Syndicalism must assemble a minority committed to direct action and strong enough to check the ruling elite.(11)

Anarchist rather than Blanquist notions appear to have weighed more heavily in the construction of syndicalism's



underlying philosophy. The literature is filled with paeons to syndicalism's spontaneity and voluntarist nature, to its profession of libertarian ideals, and to the federalist structure of the CGT, a form anarchists held to be the least authoritarian. Syndicalists praised the use of direct action as a means to heighten the individual's will to action and thereby strengthen class solidarity. For Pouget in 1901, direct action constituted "the soufflé of revolution" because it transcended the narrow particularism of individual demands.(12) CGT leaders Victor Griffuelhes and Léon Jouhaux noted in the Encyclopédie du mouvement syndicaliste that direct action was akin to an athlete's training program. Through his exercise of direct action the worker learned that "his personal activity is based on the general action of his corporation and class."(13)

Union membership and the use of direct action were effective because such activity constituted a break with the tradition of using municipal or state authorities as intermediaries in workers' conflicts with employers. Thus, syndicalism was hailed as a new departure in working-class independence. Hubert Lagardelle declared that direct action simply signified the will of the working class "to rule its own affairs in place of representation, delegations, and mandates of a third party intervening in [the workers'] place." There were two contrary principles, he observed: indirect action, the principle of democracy and its successor parliamentary socialism; and direct action, which eliminated all intermediaries existing between the worker and his objective.(14)

Because syndicalism emphasized the necessity of individual workers acting on their own behalf to bring about a just society, the movement provided a common meeting ground for both anarchists and Marxist socialists. But both schools emphasized the fact that the revolution could never be made by mere congeries of individuals, however ethical. Instead, heightened class consciousness, the precondition for revolution, must be gained through association. Therefore, despite the rhetoric preaching the virtue of small cadres, the bulk of syndicalist actions and propaganda was directed toward advancing union membership.

Clearly, syndicalism's greatest strength was that it provided the means by which to weld individuals into a united whole. A report to the 1897 CGT congress at Toulouse declared that the union sheltered the exploited under "its red banner."(15) Lagardelle asserted that the union was "the prolongation of the workshop," operating to build cohesion. In the union, he concluded,

philosophic, religious, and political differences are worn away. And all that can remain is the force of the workers to defend their common interest. . . . And the moral unity that transforms their amorphous mass into a living block forms itself little by little through the



progressive development of the consciousness of their solidarity.(16)

The belief in the inherent superiority of syndicalism's organizational structure, a form particularly appealing to libertarians, was expressed by many. Dufour pointed out that the Confederal Committee of the CGT was antiauthoritarian in its role, designed to serve "only as an intermediary, as a council to assure the cohesion and simultaneity of action of the different federations that guard their autonomy thoroughly."(17) Such organizational structure did not lessen the power of the individual worker. In a 1908 propaganda brochure designed to combat jaunisme, that is employer-sponsored unionism, jeweler Arthur Danrez noted that each federation and syndicat remained autonomous. This independence allowed the worker to continue to be inspired by "a single free discipline: the practice of solidarity."(18)

Perhaps more eloquently than anyone, Pelloutier articulated how perfectly the working-class organizations were structured. Their blueprint, he noted, was the federative principle of Bakunin and Proudhon. But the system of checks and balances he described as existing within the unions appears to have been designed by Montesquieu. Unions, said Pelloutier,

separate in power all that can be separated, define all that can be defined, distribute between different organs or functions all that has been separated and defined, leaving nothing undivided, gathering unto their administration all the conditions of publicity and control.(19)

Apparently such diffusion of power did not hamper organized labor in challenging the boss. According to a pamphlet circulated by the metalworkers' federation, in confrontations between employees and employers, the bosses would come to a clearer understanding of who were friends and foes "by clairvoyant means" rather than "by force."(20)

#### TO ECLIPSE NO ONE'S PLACE IN THE SUN

Despite assertions of syndicalism's antiauthoritarian nature, not all anarchists were convinced that the CGT would not succumb to the temptation of emphasizing organizational might at the expense of individual rights. Discussions on the value of association were always carried on to the accompaniment of a militant chorus who feared that organizational success would destroy the voluntarist nature and activist spirit of revolutionary syndicalism. In a 1908 article in La Guerre Sociale, a contributor attacked the CGT for the lackluster turnout on May Day. The organization was emphasizing recruitment at the expense of action, the critic



charged. Adopting such priorities was dangerous, for the more the Confederation added to its battalions, "the more it will be timid and reformist." Revolutions, the writer pointed out, "are made only with passion, enthusiasm, and audacity." (21)

Radical anarchist fears were also expressed in articles in Le Libertaire, which ran, ironically, during the precise point in time when the CGT was seeking adherents and anarchists were looking for legitimacy. In a 1900 issue, Max Pèlerin pointed out that syndicalism's goal of defending workers' interests, particularly with regard to salary, was nonessential to anarchists, who recognized neither wages nor authority. Furthermore, to be effective in their struggle, the unions had to work toward realizing a sense of permanency. Despite what syndicalist leaders proclaimed, the desire for permanence would give unions civil personalities, interests, properties, and regulations needing to be defended. The very act of being constituted by law forced the unions to become part of the legal power structure. As such, according to union typographer Pèlerin, syndicalism and anarchism constituted negations of each other. (22)

Responding to Pèlerin's negativism, other libertarians praised the compatibility between anarchism and unionism. Conceding that unionism's reformist and expedient goals were "paltry," Pierre Comont nevertheless suggested that anarchist militancy alone would save the worker from being duped by "socialist, étatiste politicians." (23) In another article, F. Richard concluded that unionism did not constitute a refutation of libertarian ideals. Rather, concluded Richard, himself a member of two unions, "To be an anarchist is to carry on the campaign against social inequalities." Therefore, syndicalism was a valid means to anarchist ends. (24) The integrity of that goal, Antoine Antignac later warned, would only be assured as long as the unions became centers "reuniting the proletarian forces, grouping them against bourgeois disorder, stifling no one, and allowing each idea its place in the sun." (25)

By the year of the Amiens congress, attitudes appearing in Le Libertaire seem to have become more positive concerning syndicalism and the place of anarchists in the movement. In 1906 militant hairdresser Léon Torton noted appreciatively that anarchism had actually strengthened unionism. The anarchist element had kept syndicalism out of politics and committed to the larger task of demonstrating to workers that they were "big enough and strong enough to do the jobs themselves." (26)

For all the pronouncements lauding the ideals of libertarianism or in support of Proudhon's juste milieu and the apocalyptic vision of Blanqui and Marx, syndicalist leaders constantly stressed the movement's utter lack of utopianism and the preeminently practical nature of revolutionary syndicalism's goals. Syndicalism, Lagardelle declared, is "devoid of all utopianism in the sense that it



subordinates its triumph entirely to an ensemble of preexisting conditions, and while waiting [for the social revolution], it plays a renovating role in the world."(27) The program syndicalists followed consisted of struggling for better pay, fewer hours, and improved working conditions. In 1921, when the CGT was in the throes of the attack upon it by the proponents of the Third International, the Confederation's leadership still stressed the pragmatic nature of the movement. Syndicalism, they said, was merely

the defense of professional interests. It is the only basis of workers' actions. It is not because he adheres to a political system, a philosophic doctrine, a social theory that the worker has come to the syndicat. It is because he wants to join with his comrades into a collective force that would permit him to oppose successfully patronal exploitation and to improve his lot.(28)

#### REFORMIST AND REPUBLICAN HESITATION

Despite this ongoing rejection of philosophy as a motive force in the syndicalist movement, the influence of anarchism cannot be denied. For the most part, anarchism provided the leaven giving form and substance to the program of direct action, particularly in the adoption of the principle of the general strike and sabotage as part of the militants' revolutionary arsenal. The influx of libertarians to unionism further strengthened syndicalist resolve to remain aloof from politics and independent of the Socialist Party. Certainly the anarchist specter hovering over unionism helped to generate within the middle class a fear of the movement that went well beyond the force of its members.

Criticism of anarchosyndicalism and its professed brand of direct action came both from reformists within and from the party socialists and bourgeois republicans from without. The impractical nature of union activism was noted by historian Edouard Dolléans in 1906. Syndicalists' emphasis on strikes smacked of a new religiosity. Their attempt "to concentrate all socialism in the drama of the general strike," he chided, was akin to the people of the Middle Ages believing in the millennium.(29)

A constant criticism was that syndicalism had fallen under the spell of a small cadre of evil geniuses. The doctrine of "eternal negation" of syndicalism, taunted Célestin Bouglé, was "simplistic and violent." It frightened away the mass of workers, concluded this "fellow traveler" of reform syndicalism, so "a noisy minority" could rule.(30) Reformist Louis Meyer claimed that a violent minority was organizing "goon squads" to beat up workers who refused to take part in street demonstrations.(31) In 1910, the year following Meyer's treatise concerning "the crisis of syndicalism," Auguste Keufer suggested that



syndicalist emphasis on violence was merely a cover-up to the reality of the impotence of the Confederation's leadership. These radical militants had failed to translate theory into practice. At two particularly violent strikes, they had been in such disarray they were ineffective in directing the strikes. In the struggle to suppress employment bureaus, a campaign costing over two million francs, Keufer alleged, little results had been achieved. This sorry state was due to the fact that anarchists who had taken over the unions, were in Keufer's words, "diehards" and "products of the university." (32)

That same year, Radical-Socialist Gaston Gros echoed the notion that violence was the wish of a small cadre within the unions who dreamed of a "syndicalisme du théâtre." The syndicalist majority must seek détente with the Radical-Socialist Party in order to pursue "the noble ideal of social regeneration." (33) Socialists of other persuasions had their own plans for unionism. In 1911 Guesdist deputies Henri Ghesquière and Adéodat Compère-Morel noted on the floor of the Chamber that syndicalism had become too dangerous to ignore. Their speeches, punctuated by applause from the left, praised "syndicalism of accord." The tactics of "guerre à outrance" being carried on against employers by the CGT denied the spirit of negotiation, a necessary adjunct to the use of strikes. Taking up the theme, Compère-Morel asserted that strikes should be regarded by the working class as "the last arm" of their struggle because they were too dangerous and were not in the workers' interest. Children going hungry or workers eating in soup kitchens were victims of a movement that was content to sacrifice means to ends. Rather, concluded Compère-Morel, syndicalism must rely on parliament as the instrument of reform, for the eventual capture of the state, and the ultimate expropriation of capitalism. (34)

The idea that syndicalist leaders were exploiting the workers was also the theme of a British observer of French syndicalism in 1912. Sir Arthur Clay noted that the CGT used strikes to intimidate the middle class and familiarize workers with the idea of the general strike even when there was little hope that the strike would produce immediate tangible results. Syndicalism's strength, concluded Clay, lay only

in its direct appeal to the primitive instincts of mankind . . . many of the men to whom the appeal is made have but little knowledge or experience of life outside their immediate surroundings, they are not given to reflection, and they are therefore at the mercy of glib-tongued agitators who assure them that they can never hope in their own lifetime to obtain their "rights" by constitutional methods of reform. (35)



## TOWARD THE GENERAL STRIKE

To critics, direct action was naive, impractical, idealistic, and a tactic that placed workers in serious jeopardy, either through loss of salary or from adverse public opinion. Strikes hampered the steady progress toward working-class reform. Direct action also frightened workers away from union membership. Despite the critics, as time went on, representatives to union congresses and contributors to the working-class press professed increasing acceptance of all forms of direct action, particularly for the general strike. These professions of support were backed up by solid evidence of a leftist swing within the working class itself: from the movement of some reformist unions, such as the miners, into the radical camp, to the sharp rise of militant leadership within the federations and unions, to the increasing willingness of the rank and file to resort to violent confrontations to press their demands.(36) The theory and practice of direct action did not develop in a vacuum. They were an integral part of the evolution of the trade union movement in France.

Strikes were not a modern invention. But with the exception of a period between 1878 and 1882, years which served as a catalyst to the passage of the Waldeck-Rousseau Law, most strike activity in France had had only a limited effect in gaining satisfaction of workers' demands. Government repression was a factor. So too was the economic climate. "In times of crisis, the strike is a mediocre instrument," notes Michelle Perrot in her masterful study of strikes in France. The years of highest unemployment were also the years in which strike activity received its highest check.(37) Workers' élan was easily broken by the gravity of the economic situation and by the fact that high unemployment provided employers with a ready pool of scabs. Another factor contributing to the limited success of strikes during the early years of unionism, according to Perrot, was that most demonstrations were simply explosions of discontent, carried on outside of any organizational pattern. Between 1871 and 1890, approximately 72 percent of the conflicts escaped syndicalist direction.(38) But as syndicalism grew, so did strike activity and union involvement in labor demonstrations.

Why was syndicalism so slow to direct workers' demands during this period? Partly this was a reflection of the essential hesitancy of workers and their leaders to resort to violence. In part, syndicalism's weakness was due to its own internal factionalism and the struggle between trade unionism and political socialism. Yet, in surveying the speeches of delegates to trade expositions and workers' congresses, Michelle Perrot denotes an evolution in thinking regarding strikes. The tendency evidenced in workers' meetings during the 1870's was to condemn the strike as "a scourge": illegal, expensive, and unpatriotic. Said delegate Vonnois of Marseille at the 1876 Paris conference:



"If we wish to see our industrialism conserve its renown and the rank it has always occupied in Europe," he stated, then workers must reject the use of strikes.(39)

During the 1880's, Perrot records, a change occurred. In many of the unions, economic crisis brought a general decline of up to one-half of the membership. Apparently many who dropped from the ranks wanted to follow the more conventional forms of economic activity, such as establishing cooperatives. In many organizations, only the activists and the more militant young members remained. The falling away of the more conservative members had its effect: from 1888 to 1893, according to Perrot, syndicalism "was carried to new heights." The effect of this surge in syndicalist activity was the increase in successful strike action and the election of socialist deputies in 1893.(40)

Neither workers' militancy, nor the use of the general strike was new. What was novel about the concept was the assertion that the general strike was to be either the precursor of revolution or the revolution itself. This notion was encompassed in a resolution at the FNS congress in 1888. Partial strikes were only "a means of agitation and organization," said excavation worker Boulé, the general strike "would make the social capitalist edifice turn somersaults."(41) Thus, as Perrot points out, "the experience of the generalized strike preceded the theory of the general strike; the spectacle of the power of the strike provoked reflection on its possibilities."(42) Those seeking to lead the burgeoning trade union movement would have been deficient in leadership qualities if they had failed to seize upon the idea of the general strike as a primary weapon in their revolutionary arsenal.

The adoption of the general strike as the ultimate expression of the anarchosyndicalist movement involved more than turning the reality of general strike into a theory of revolution. The device of the general strike seemed to be practically suited to all facets of syndicalism. This is perhaps why the principle came to be exclusively identified with radical unionism. For one thing, the use of the strike appeared to be in keeping with the Law of 1884. Speaking in 1892, Briand assured workers that the strike was an action of "legal revolution." "That which you cannot obtain by persuasion, obtain by force--not by violent force, by barricades and bullets, but by legal force, . . . through a sit-down strike."(43)

Furthermore, the introduction of resolutions on the general strike in the early labor congresses, as previously noted, was a conscious political move aimed at purging Broussists and Guesdists from positions of power. The Bordeaux delegates in 1888 were not just being transported on a wave of revolutionary rhetoric when they called for adoption of the general strike; they were also seeking to rid the FNS of its possibilists. The same device was used to purge Guesdists from the FNS and the FBT by those who rejected electoral activity as the means to revolution.



Finally, once these "political" elements were gone, it became necessary for union leaders to find a means of uniting the residue of workers who now comprised the syndicalist movement. The principle of the general strike appealed to the more militant Blanquists, Bakuninists, and anarchists within unionism.

It is not surprising that initially the idea of the general strike had as many interpretations as interpreters. When Briand introduced the resolution at the Nantes congress, delegates were more confused about it than adverse to the idea. Perhaps Briand himself was intentionally vague concerning the specific nature and consequences of that which he was proposing. For him the general strike was to be "a family, a flag, . . . a fusillade" to overcome workers' egoism and provide a direct assault on capitalism. The immediate response to Briand's proposal indicates the eclectic nature of the early syndicalist movement. Jules Magré of Toulon was supportive, calling the general strike "a revolutionary moment which must follow." Precision instrument maker Rémy Bes voiced fears that a general strike would be premature on the grounds that the proletariat was not organized. Bourse activist Beaupérin's only concern was that the strike should be spontaneous. Dijonnaise bookbinder Adolphe Raymond believed that the employment of direct action was a useful instrument of propaganda, while watchmaker Etienne Pedron was suspicious because the idea seemed to him to be in the nature of a political debate. And militant Guesdist Félix Lavigne dismissed the notion as a utopian scheme and one that was clearly illegal.(44)

In 1897, with the Guesdists purged, delegates to the Toulouse congress of the CGT were less confused about the idea of the general strike and more committed to accepting it as a means of class action to gain workers' demands.(45) By the 1900 congress, delegates were more enthusiastic about the proposal, if no more agreed as to what the strike was and what it could achieve. Edouard Briat, representing precision toolmakers of Paris, wholeheartedly applauded the idea for its practical nature. For years unions had been uncertain about the efficacy of partial strikes. This was because the majority of workers were generally cool to such walkouts. After a few weeks the militant minority was forced to seek work elsewhere, leaving the politically indifferent gaining seniority in the factories. A general strike, lasting only a few days, however, would enlist more supporters to the revolutionary cause. Furthermore, continued Briat, the nonviolent nature of a general strike was another practical feature. Many men might be hesitant about taking a gun and making revolution in the streets; or they would be dissuaded from such activity by their wives' fears. But in a general strike, particularly a sit-down strike, Briat concluded, "it is the worker who remains in his own place, putting outside the law the employer who wants to force him to leave."(46)

Most of Briat's confrères supported him in his endorsement. Delegate Bouchet of the leatherworkers' union



was chauvinistic in his defense. Speaking to those who believed that a general strike could succeed only if it were part of an international movement, Bouchet, a noted debater, assured the delegates that French workers had nothing to fear by initiating the strike. During the French Revolution, ideas that ultimately came to prevail were thrown into the world. The society of well-being and freedom installed as a result of a revolution made on economic terrain would provide an example once again for the world's workers to follow. Bouchet's speech was so stirring that the delegates voiced enthusiastic support for the general strike, agreeing not only to its efficacy, but also calling for its immediacy!(47)

Few had any fanciful illusions about the effects of direct action in general or of the general strike in particular. More often the practical results to be obtained by these measures were stressed. Writing in 1901, metallurgist Paul Delesalle declared that the general strike was "a new form of revolution more in keeping with the modern industrial regime."(48) To Griffuelhes direct action was infinitely practical because it was incremental: it was the daily exercise of the workers' efforts until the final end of general strike and social revolution occurred.(49)

Generally, syndicalists emphasized that strike action was a practical right sanctioned by law, ethics, and history. In 1900 Delesalle pointed out that capitalists sought to discourage workers' activity by claiming that strikes were useless in the face of the law of supply and demand. But capitalists themselves resorted to similar methods when they claimed they had a right to deny employment to those who did not produce enough. If strikes could be carried on by employers, he contended, the right to strike must be equally extended to employees.(50) Direct action was also a right authorized by French history. A contributor to La Voix du Peuple declared that the general strike was merely "the putting to practice on the economic terrain the article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man which says that when members of the social body are oppressed . . . insurrection would be the most holy of obligations for every one."(51) Such insurrection need not be a violent occasion. Direct action, said Paul Louis, "does not necessarily signify a coup de force, premeditated violence, brutal suppression, effusion of blood, pillage, and destruction. It is not the romantic revolution." Direct action could take many forms, Louis concluded, "from boycott to general strike, from pacific demonstrations to refusing to pay taxes."<sup>52</sup>

#### SABOTAGE AND OTHER "BENIGN" FORMS OF DIRECT ACTION

"Practical" and "pacific" seem scarcely appropriate words to define the use of sabotage. Along with the general



strike, sabotage appears to have been among the more violent aspects of direct action supported by syndicalists. At the 1898 CGT congress at Rennes, the theoretician and leading proponent of the tactic, Emile Pouget, suggested that sabotage was a bourgeois rather than a proletarian invention. "The deliberate adulteration of food and the construction of wretched slums" were two examples of bourgeois sabotage.(53) Naturally the reformists rejected such violent methods. Keufer condemned the practice as "a system lacking in morality, courage, and dignity."(54) Proponents of such action believed to the contrary, that sabotage was a simple means for the worker to act in his own defense and on his own initiative.

Far from being a necessarily violent act, many considered sabotage an alternative to violence. Sabotage was to be directed solely against the capitalists' profits, insisted Yvetot in 1914, rather than against the life or health of another person. The particular milieu and the creativity of the individual worker dictated the means to be employed. Charcutiers could leave salt out of the pâtés; wine stewards might leave casks open for the wine to evaporate. Restaurant workers could give larger portions and be careless with the butter, Pouget suggested.(55) When the boss forced workers to use shoddy material and workmanship in order to increase profits, former Blanquist Victor Griffuelhes suggested that workers could sabotage capitalist designs by working with integrity to produce a perfect product.(56)

Sabotage did not produce nebulous results, as critics charged. Dufour noted in 1913 that the complexity of industry meant that a small act could have enormous consequences.(57) By constant application of creative methods of sabotage, declared Henri Dret at a bourse conference at Auxerre, "the employer will see his benefits diminishing, and he will conclude by understanding that in the excess of work resides his own diminished profits."(58)

Sabotage campaigns were successful because they operated on both the employers and the consumers. In their bid for a six-day work week, novelty and confectionary store workers displayed signs saying that Sunday customers would be badly served. Parisian cobblers warned that shoes brought in on Sundays would be damaged rather than repaired. Hairdressers campaigning for shorter hours announced that any client who had the audacity to keep workers beyond eight o'clock in the evening "would be scalped."(59) The use of "benign sabotage" was the impetus to legislation providing for Monday closings for hairdressers. In this instance, Yvetot concluded in 1914, the use of sabotage proved to be more effective than "four years of beautiful discourse at the tribune of parliament."(60)

Because of the felt need to woo the less militant workers, the more traditional, less aggressive methods of working-class activity were suggested. Although Marxists had rejected the formation of mutuals and cooperatives as



being utopian, syndicalists accepted these organizations as valid under certain circumstances. Participation in cooperatives might encourage "egotistical preoccupations" and acquisitive tendencies associated with the bourgeoisie, noted Pelloutier.(61) But 'as long as members retained their qualities "of convinced militants and not shopkeepers," declared Jouhaux in his report to the 1912 CGT congress, cooperatives represented a valid form of direct action.(62)

Always the practical nature of cooperation was stressed. At a 1910 conference of bourses of Toulouse, A. Danrez reminded his confrères that cooperation served not only to suppress "parasitic intermediaries," it also brought money into the unions' coffers. Profits from the coops, rather than membership dues, could be used to carry on the struggle against capitalism, Danrez pointed out.(63) That same year, Etienne Tabard also praised the pragmatic nature of this form of direct action, noting that during strikes, products furnished by the cooperatives at reduced prices would be used in the communal soup kitchens run by the unions.(64)

Newer forms of direct action were called for.(65) An important campaign was carried on by reform syndicalists in support of the use of the union label as a form of direct action preferable to sabotage or boycott. Introduced by Keufer in 1883, the use of the label was a form of direct action having widespread appeal.(66) One supporter, who signed himself "D.S. Typo" in La Voix du Peuple, praised the use of the union mark as an excellent propaganda device. Goods produced under the label were better products because they were made by union workers. By using the label, the public would know that the best workers were organized. On the other hand, boycotts meant unemployment and sabotage harmed the workers, who as consumers had to buy damaged goods. The future of syndicalism, concluded the contributor, rested on such offensive actions as using the label, and not on defensive actions such as strikes.(67)

The introduction of the use of the union label by the reformists was intended to attract the more moderate workers to unionism and diffuse some of the radical strength within the CGT. Yet, a number of the more revolutionary members of syndicalism also praised the many advantages afforded by using the label. In 1902 Pouget ridiculed those bourgeoisie who said that the use of the syndicalist mark constituted an illegal restraint of trade. Sheer nonsense, jeered Pouget. If that were the case, the government would have to banish all advertisements from the newspapers.(68) Hairdresser Alexandre Luquet was more direct: using the label "strikes our hated adversaries in the cash register," he cheered. As such, it was an effective revolutionary act!(69)

To leaders of syndicalism every act, every union campaign to achieve any economic gain, was a successful battle in the class war. Direct action was defined as strikes, boycotts, and using the label. It also referred to



a host of other activities: agitation for regulation of apprentices and in support of minimum wages, shorter hours, enforcement of factory safety legislation, equal pay for equal work, suppression of piecework, or of work in convents, prisons, and military garrisons. Direct action included reporting strike activity as well as incidences of suicides and deaths from starvation.(70) It was evident in campaigns conducted against worker-supported retirement legislation, forcible arbitration contracts, or the use of dangerous substances in factories.(71) All these activities constituted "the improvements which are necessary for the working class to march toward its emancipation," declared delegate Cleuet at the CGT congress in Le Havre.(72)

Most syndicalists agreed with Lagardelle that this revolution would take place incrementally, as "the natural conclusion of a long series of preparatory acts" by a working class "long educated and patiently organized."(73) Partial strikes were necessary skirmishes leading to the main event. Even if checked, exclaimed Pouget, the failure of a partial strike left in the heart of the vanquished worker a desire for vindication. Feelings of revenge were necessary attributes to the development of class consciousness and the will to action.(74) Every failure served as a deposit in the memory bank of the working class to be drawn upon when the general strike was at hand.

All gains, all actions were revolutionary. Economic reforms were to be achieved by the workers themselves by direct action. These efforts increased workers' sense of solidarity. Reforms increased the well-being of the working class, while constituting a partial expropriation of capitalist profits.(75) In unionists' minds, therefore, the dividing line between reformist and revolutionary activity was an artificially imposed one.

## REFORM IS REVOLUTIONARY

Indeed, much of the literature of revolutionary syndicalism was directed to the task of explaining that reforms, defined as economic gains achieved by direct action at the expense of capitalist profit, were revolutionary acts. One cannot classify "direct action as being the theory of revolutionary syndicalism and reformism as being against it," declared militant socialist and syndicalist Eugène Fournière. All public demonstrations were instances of direct action and hence, revolutionary.(76) A survey of the reform campaigns carried on in the working-class press reveals how thoroughly syndicalists regarded reform and revolution as being synonymous. In 1905 typographer Louis Niel pointed out that with over 700,000 workers unemployed, a shorter workday would reduce joblessness and result in higher wages. Increased wages would benefit labor and serve as a drain on capitalist profits.(77)

In a lengthy piece in La Voix du Peuple, Pouget took



Auguste Keufer to task for claiming that revolutionaries sought to perpetuate working class misery by heartlessly rejecting all labor reforms. Such assertions were patently false, countered Pouget. "Reforms prepare the revolution; well-being engenders well-being . . . the miserable slave who lives under an implacable yoke of bondage is incapable of desiring liberty; . . . with starvation, anemia, empty stomachs, it is impossible to make an effort." Revolutionary syndicalists were far more practical than reformists credited them with being. Who preferred working twelve hours to working eight? Who would rather earn twenty-five sous per day instead of ten francs? No worker Pouget had ever met! No unionist opposed reform. When real ones came along, he declared, we take them--even from our enemies. Yet revolutionaries were wise enough to know that such benefits did not result from the capitalists' fondness for labor. Reforms occurred because the capitalists could not do otherwise. "There is no antagonism between reformists and revolutionaries," concluded Pouget, except that which was generated by politicians "who try to profit from our divisions and sow discord in the labor organizations." (78)

In another article written the same year, Pouget returned to the theme that reform and revolution were not at opposite poles. Keufer had again charged that to be a revolutionary was "to refuse to submit to inevitable contingencies." This was absurd, said Pouget. The revolutionary is not a Don Quixote charging imaginary windmills. Rather he is "a conscious man who wants to transform the actual social milieu and who knows that the best means of preparing and hastening this transformation is daily to force amelioration of the condition of the life of the masses and to increase [workers'] knowledge." That was why syndicalism's struggle rested on double principles: reform and revolution. Revolutionaries are not enamored with "le beau geste," nor do they have an inordinate desire to engage in violence, Pouget continued. They were as dedicated as political socialists to seeking partial reforms. Why not? Whenever parliament passed workers' legislation it was only because such reforms had either been demanded or already largely conquered by the unions. The government was only submitting to the obvious and the inevitable. That reformists failed to see the practical nature of the revolutionaries surprised Pouget. Reformists were astonished, for instance, when revolutionaries negotiated with their employers. But "The boss is not a myth," reminded Pouget; "we must thus take account of him--despite the fact that we are in a struggle against him." He may be the enemy, but he was a real enemy. Therefore, the unions could not afford to ignore him. The only real reformists," concluded Pouget, "are the revolutionaries." (79)

Not even anarchists were partisans of all-or-nothing. In 1902 Sébastien Faure's Le Libertaire carried responses to questions posed of leading libertarians. One question asked



for opinions on the best means to hasten the establishment of future society. Although many respondents suggested education as the sole means, and some like Louise Michel dismissed reforms as useless, a few others accepted the idea that improvements were necessary to the social revolution. Partial reform, said Urbain Gohier, even if mediocre, expanded however slightly the workers' means of action and helped to dramatize the evils in present-day society. Indeed, any means--"apostolic, pacific, or philosophic"--were acceptable "to propagating the idea of justice." (80)

In another series exploring the nature of socialism and anarchism, the editor himself undertook to explain that not even anarchists were immune to responding to contingencies. For Faure revolution and evolution were part of the same process. The anarchist was neither "an evolutionary antirevolutionary nor a revolutionary antievolutionary."

He knows that Evolution and Revolution are conjoined [Faure declared], that the one precedes and the other follows, that 'the first prepares and the second accomplishes, that slow is the one and prompt is the other, that there is between the former and the latter the same relation as between the effect and the cause, as between the newborn and the ascendant.' (81)

Evolution and revolution are not two contradictory facts, concluded Faure: "In different times and in special circumstances, [the two represent] a series of facts and ideas, indissoluble and inseparable." (82)

To revolutionaries, then, there were two kinds of reformism: direct action carried out on the economic terrain by the workers themselves and legislative activity carried on by politicians for electoral gains. To pursue reform by the first means, said Delesalle in 1902, guaranteed workers' independence. But seeking reforms from the state by means of electoral activity could only make labor subservient to the middle class controlling the state. (83)

Syndicalism's stance regarding electoral activity was originally dictated by the need to survive in the face of murderous political sectarianism and the fear of Guesdist domination. As a result, the 1906 Charter of Amiens was designed to be labor's magna carta of freedom from partisan disagreement. The continuing aversion to electoral politics stemmed from a host of other practical imperatives. To become involved in party activity, syndicalists believed, would dilute labor's effectiveness in the struggle for integral emancipation.

Electoral activity tended to temper revolutionary commitment, was the conclusion of Griffuelhes in 1911, after an extensive tour of France. Among the miners in Pas-de-Calais, he noted, the union was merely a "recruiter of electoral votes" and "the springboard" to political office. In Lyon and Grenoble partisan politics had ravaged



the workers' movement. Syndical action and party action were incompatible, he reasoned, for wherever politics was strong, unionism was weak. To maintain its vitality the working-class movement must exercise itself without any limits and remain isolated from "the capriciousness of central authority and the interest of a heterogeneous electoral clientele." (84)

In a 1902 article, Emile Pouget outlined how the infiltration of political elements into the unions created discord. Unionists want to achieve their own social emancipation, while

political adherents need the intervention of an exterior agent--state or municipal--to resolve conflicts and establish relations between capitalism and labor, and effect the social transformation. To do that, [politicians] must be preoccupied with their agents, in sympathy with them. Then the union mirrors politics and is lost to political action.

This kind of political action, Pouget concluded, taught workers only how to vote, not how to become conscious of their situation. (85)

Electoral activity was seen as being disruptive because it also created a conflict between means and ends. Speaking at the 1900 congress of the CGT, Parisian teamster Henri Gérard noted the irrelevance of political government in the social revolution. "It's not that the form of government can influence economic conditions; isn't it the reverse, [he queried] that economic conditions influence the form of government? We're not making a revolution with the goal of changing the government." Therefore one could not hope to use electoral means to effect an economic transformation. (86)

Another criticism was that partisan activity hampered the development of class solidarity. A party was heterogeneous, but a class was the creation of the economic milieu and represented men at the same stage of development. The Socialist Party was without "a single common economic thread [to] maintain its cohesion." As a mélange of social elements resting on an ideological base "without material support," the party was unable to represent the real strength of the working class. Powerless, the party sought to become part of official society and thereby had lost its revolutionary élan, concluded Lagardelle. "The class struggle transforms itself into class collaboration, socialist opposition into ministerial socialism, the state of war into the state of peace. This has made such a chaos of consciousness that one would have to construe it as the twilight of socialism." (87)

Workers must guard against falling into a similar slumber. Partisan activity dulled the proletariat into a false lethargy. The electoral battle occurred only every



four years. In the interim, concluded André Saulière in a 1913 study on the general strike, the voter trusted in his deputy and dosed "in a limitless confidence on the effect of his vote." (88) Political parties may have been created to represent the workers, as Jean Grave pointed out in 1906. But they had too quickly become mired in political reformism and more devoted to preserving their legal status and their huge treasuries. (89) Party politics also corrupted the politician. In the beginning "you have a revolutionary as a deputy," asserted Briat in response to Millerandism. At the end of four years, however, the militant has become "a perfect reactionary." (90)

Electioneering did not lead to revolution, was syndicalism's message. Industrialism had rendered party politics impotent: only working-class pressure was sufficient to force parliament to pass labor reforms. Thus the political body, noted La Voix du Peuple, had become nothing more than "a chamber of registration" to workers' direct action. (91) Above all, partisan activity was aimed primarily at winning elections, while syndicalism was committed to revolution. The union's goal was to take from the boss his function within the workshop, concluded Lagardelle. Syndicalism's aim was to take from the state its function in society. (92)

#### THE PRAGMATISM OF DIRECT ACTION IN THE ECONOMIC REALM

The abundant literature on these forms of direct action leads to some interesting conclusions regarding the nature of the French workers' movement. When one examines the rhetoric and practice of direct action from the context of the syndicalists' definition of this activity, it is apparent that the emphasis on direct action was aimed practically at the initial goal of recruiting union members and raising class consciousness. As such, the principle was designed to appeal to a specific population, possessing a particular historical tradition, at a distinct stage of social and economic development.

Syndical organization was narrowly proscribed by government legislation. The working class was relatively passive because of purges of militant workers in the wake of 1871. It was a class consistent only in the fact that its members were in a highly transitional state. Artisans were moving professionally. Peasants were moving geographically: flocking to urban centers to work in the burgeoning industries. Little class consciousness could exist among this fragmented population. The peasant-worker was barely literate. (93) The better-educated artisanal element was wedded to a variety of philosophical schools. Illiteracy and ideological sectarianism ensured the slow growth of working-class unity.

The workplace too was composed of a myriad of conflicting and competing entities, going beyond the simple categories of male and female worker, artisan and



proletariat. The occupational community unionism sought to address was comprised of all types: from the worker in the small provincial factory with some degree of corporate and local identification, to the peasant "bird of passage" alienated from his comrades and his natal village. There were those whose fortunes were rising as a result of industrialization, and others employed in trades which for centuries had ranked among the professional elite, now teetering on the brink of technological obsolescence. The organizational life of the worker was equally varied. There were federations with long rosters of committed dues-paying members, and small locals with shadow bureaucracies, meeting in bare rooms grudgingly provided by the local town councils. There were members of corporations who traditionally had used the tactics of carefully planned, concerted job action; while there were other groups, never given to patience, accustomed to quick, often violent demonstrations in order to cow the bosses into submission. To appeal to this diverse population, syndicalists had to be able to speak to the multitudes without falling into the mire of banality. Direct action was the lingua franca of a fragmented population and the way to give viability and expression to the culture of revolution.

The call for direct action in the economic realm was designed to attract both conservatives and radicals to unionism. Direct action was labor's natural right. The industrial revolution had brought into being a new condition of existence. Economics had spawned the development of large industry and had dictated the growth of unionism and the development of class consciousness, syndicalists preached. The new man produced by the changing economic milieu was the one directed "to proclaiming the necessity of imminent well-being," declared a union supporter in 1906, and to preparing citizens "to break all the obstacles by the most effective and prompt means." (94) The use of direct action, enlisted in the service of removing barriers to the realization of immediate material reform, had a realistic appeal to all workers, skilled and unskilled.

Also practical was the fact that direct action, so defined, provided a multiple route to revolution. It encompassed all forms of working-class participation, from joining a study circle to joining in the general strike. Such a broad gamut of activity might appeal to timid peasants and artisans, as well as those steeped in a tradition of violence. Every impulse for action was served. Buying union-made products or joining a consumers' cooperative was a revolutionary activity the passive worker could feel comfortable performing. Yet, as defined by unionists, all forms of direct action were deemed legal and ethically justifiable.

Even that which has generally been regarded as the epitome of violence, the general strike, was cast in such a way as to appeal to the most diverse elements within the work force. By participating in the general strike, the



artisan could take pleasure in the feelings of security generated by the idea of corporate action by all workers. This effort, infinitely superior to bombs and barricades, would be the social revolution initiating a new society infused with the ethics of the workshop.

The dramatic nature of the general strike further appealed to both the submissive and the fatalistic, the skilled worker facing an uncertain future, as well as the unskilled worker threatening and threatened by the future. Sir Arthur Clay's charge that direct action played upon the primitive instincts is not without validity. Rather than serving as a criticism of the movement, this method suggests one of syndicalism's basic strengths. It addressed the primal needs of those workers who were unionism's potential recruits.

The summons to direct action was not generally symbolic or utopian, however. The call to revolution was almost always framed in the most pragmatic of terms. Edouard Berth might speak of the general strike as Marx's "grand battle" of life and death, God's judgment, or Hegel's world spirit realizing itself.(95) Georges Sorel might praise the symbolic nature of the general strike. But to syndicalists, Sorel and other intellectuals were "fanatics." (96) Their assertion that the general strike was intended to have an apocalyptic goal, held out to the workers like the promise of heavenly wings and halos, was a total misreading of syndicalism's meaning. The tactic of the general strike was never intended to be a myth. It was as much of a reality as any other form of direct action, but one inchoate in form, and therefore unlimited in its possibilities. By not concretizing the definition of the general strike, radicals and reformists could sharply disagree among themselves as to its definition, yet still unite over the common goal of revolution.

In sum, few working-class leaders thought or spoke in cosmic terms. Fewer still had any grand illusions about the nature of the revolution they were attempting to launch. A 1921 report presented to the Lille congress of the CGT proved to be another strong assertion of unionism's pragmatism.

We do not believe in the apocalypse [the report noted], nor can we tell our followers that capitalism is foundering when everything demonstrates to the contrary. We do not want to trick workers into thinking the road is easy and the end is in their hands. We would rather point out to the proletariat the difficulty of its task.(97)

The task at hand was revolution. Direct action through efforts to gain reforms was the means to attain that end. Such means were also practical responses to reality. Labor reforms swelled the ranks of unionism with new converts and fellow travelers, thereby heightening class consciousness by



building solidarity. Reforms also increased the well-being of the workers. Material benefits were regarded as incremental stages of the revolution. Each gain chipped away at capitalism's treasure chest and transferred the chips to the working class. Ultimately, it was believed, the treasure would belong to the producers instead of the exploiters.

Direct action was also a practical means of achieving adherence to unionism by those with differing philosophies. The emphasis on action appealed to Blanquists and anarchists. The devotion to data-gathering and the support of revolution through reform appealed to positivists. Syndicalism's antiministerial pronouncements might even appeal to Guesdists. Anarchists were attracted by the relative lack of organizational structure within unionism, which was in itself not so much the result of ideological preference as it was a simple response to the fact that union membership was always modest in scale. Anarchists supported the CGT's unit voting policy and were attracted to the nonauthoritarian structure of the Confederation, which as Pouget pointed out, was not

an organ of direction, but of coordination. . . . here there is cohesion and not centralization, impulsion and not direction. Federalism is supreme, and at every degree, the different organisms--individual, syndical, Federational, or the Bourses du travail--are all autonomous.(98)

In the CGT, power remained diffused. The Confederation's role, observed Jouhaux, was not to manipulate strikes, but "to second them [and] call for national solidarity." The CGT did not determine if strikes were to be "violent or pacific in [their] demonstration," Jouhaux concluded. That determination was based on necessity and attendant conditions.(99)

The idea of direct action appealed to Proudhonist and Marxist prescriptions concerning the idea of the working class carrying out its own revolution. The common practice in France had been to use the offices of the state to mediate disputes between labor and the bosses. This tradition, syndicalists believed, not only dulled the individual's ability to act on his own behalf, it also further enhanced the power of the centralized state. Only through the worker's individual and collective effort could he commit himself to the goal of emancipation, develop feelings of solidarity, effect partial expropriation of capitalism's wealth, raise his own and his comrades' immediate state of well-being, and prepare for the day when the final blow would make the social revolution. While some followers of Proudhon may have been in agreement with their mentor's abhorrence of strikes, others no doubt believed, as Annie Kriegel has noted, that the strike was only an extension of Proudhon's theories concerning the necessity



for economic war.(100) The syndicat seemed to parallel Proudhon's mutuals, wherein individuality was maintained and the worker laboring for his own well-being, furthered the well-being of all. Action within this most primary social unit would produce revolution through devolution. The new order, to be based on the union, appeared to be in accordance with Proudhon's anarchist vision.

The definition of direct action as encompassing everything but partisan activity was infinitely practical. The aversion to politics assured independence from leftist parties and diminished the possibilities of schism within the labor movement. It appealed to the politically sophisticated worker, frustrated by government vacillation toward labor or exasperated by the circuitous development of the Socialist Party. It also sought to give reassurance to the newly arrived, unskilled worker confused regarding the nature of the milieu in which he found himself. To the politically naive, the process by which electoral choice was translated into who would be seated in the Chamber must have seemed to be a mystery as unfathomable as the church's preachings on the doctrine of transubstantiation. In syndicalism there was neither electoral uncertainty nor party labels.

Further, the definition of direct action as economic activity allowed union members to exercise an unheard-of freedom in the electoral realm. It is true that while the CGT remained officially aloof from partisan stands, the working-class press often carried articles counseling workers to withhold their support of a specific candidate or to abstain in a particular election. Syndicalists understood that electoral abstention was often more effective than participation in influencing a political outcome. An individual or collective act of abstention in the voting booth was regarded as being as acceptable a form of direct action as boycotting a particular employer or a nonunion product.

The Charter of Amiens emancipated the political conscience of the individual; it did not outlaw individual political action. The Charter merely meant that union membership was not dependent on party affiliation. In fact, association was not dependent on much of anything except the will to belong. For syndicalists, noted Jouhaux, direct action was "aparliamentary," not antiparliamentary.(101) Syndicalism was not antipolitical; it just took a dim view of party politics. That distinction is a necessary one. It helps to explain the fact that so many working-class leaders were also politically engaged. In spite of this political activism--or more practically, because of it--the CGT itself took no official position in electoral contests. Such neutrality notwithstanding, syndicalists were nevertheless aware that pressure in the economic realm produced reaction and responses in the parliamentary realm. Thus, as Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly explain in their study of Strikes in France 1830-1968, direct action was utterly political.(102) Socialists used political activity to



achieve economic reform; syndicalists were committed to using economic activity to bring about reform of the state and the workplace. But for syndicalists, the union rather than the party constituted the primary locus of workers' political power.

As conceived by syndicalism, party socialism was divisive and exclusionary. Direct action, so defined, was simple and direct. It constituted a return to the idea of Rousseau's world of the social contract, wherein individual will was the primary force in denoting the general will. With direct action there were no intermediaries between immediate act and immediate consequence. The worker as subject acted directly to better the material conditions of his existence. His actions produced a chain reaction. A multitude of quantitative changes would ultimately work to produce a vast qualitative change that would be the social revolution.

As defined by syndicalism, direct action was also intended to be ahistorical. It was a way to wean workers away from their faith in the Republic of Jacobin centralism. This was not an easy task. Many workers, such as Auguste Keufer, were tenacious in their support of the Third Republic. Said Keufer in 1909, "I place the Republic above all forms of government, even above ignorant universal suffrage and the mistakes that it can commit." (103) To the revolutionaries, however, the Republic and the political system supporting it, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, was repressive, exploitative, and based on competition and inequality. The series of shocks from the repression of the Communards, and from Boulangism, the Panama scandal, and the Dreyfus affair, demonstrated that both state and system were inept and corrupt. While much of their rhetoric was aimed at assuring workers that the economic revolution was to be an extension of the political revolution of 1789, syndicalists nevertheless remembered that the efforts of the preceding revolution had also been devoted to erasing all forms of corporate identity, from feudalism to unionism. To be a republican patriot was to be nonassociated. Thus, the notion of direct action through unionism, which was itself a critique of the state, was a practical means of overturning Jacobin ideas of nonassociation and maintaining a revolutionary posture.

What inspired syndicalism's practical thrust? For the most part, pragmatism was dictated by the need to survive. The Waldeck-Rousseau Law had stated that workers could form associations only for the defense of their professional interests. In the early years, therefore, syndicalist leaders stressed the pursuit of bread-and-butter issues over the loftier goal of workers' emancipation. Syndicalism's pragmatism was meant to be a magnet to union membership. At the 1900 Paris congress, porcelain worker Edouard Treich emphasized the fact that the members, particularly from the provinces, demanded of their leaders a clear-cut and achievable program.



If you want us to follow you [he reminded them], be practical, indicate the formulae, indicate the fashion under which you will operate, and do not blame the provincials for being colder than you, and above all, more practical. Have confidence in them also; they not only ask to follow you, but on the condition that you give them proof, that having indicated that you wish to be followed, and of the end you wish to attain, that you are sufficiently strong enough to hold on to the power that you are seeking.(104)

Were the methods of syndicalism a success? Strike activity increased, as did other forms of direct action. Union membership rose, as did union involvement in directing strikes. Immediate reforms were forthcoming; workers' consciousness was also raised.(105) Granted, the growth of unionism was always connected to the sway of the economic pendulum; but the practical nature of revolutionary syndicalism allowed unionists to attempt to take advantage of every economic situation. Inflations and depressions produced working-class discontent and raised union membership. Economic upturns, on the other hand, brought wage increases, thereby providing the greater cushion of well-being needed to sustain workers during walkouts.(106) Union membership was always linked with strike activity, and each influenced the other dialectically. In turn, syndicalist strength and working-class militancy were able to force legislators to take notice of labor's demands.

Direct action, in terms of its political effects, was also successful, because it allowed syndicalists to articulate a consistent program of action and clearly defined goals, even in the face of working-class apathy, discouragement, or confusion. Further, by positioning itself on the extreme left, syndicalism was able to serve both as a radical point of reference for the Socialist Party deputies involved in the game of political compromise and as a constant reminder to them of the power of their working-class constituents. Syndicalism's reliance on direct action provided unionists with the means of affecting the political decision-making process without being chastened by it. The commitment to steer clear of the shoals of internal political sectarianism was also in evidence after World War I. The autonomy of the CGT was maintained against those who wished to subvert the union organizations to the nationalist and political aims of the leaders of the Third International. If direct action were to be defined narrowly as remaining independent of political sects and parties, then the road followed by revolutionary syndicalism can be deemed both consistent and a success.



## NOTES

1. Pouget in Robert Goetz-Girey, La pensée syndicale française: militants et théoriciens (Paris, 1948), p. 57; and in V[ictor] Griffuelhes, et al., Syndicat et syndicalisme (Paris, n.d.), p. 7.

2. Bourse Régionale du Travail. Compte rendu du congrès régional corporatif (Auxerre, 1907), p. 23.

3. Paul Louis, Le syndicalisme contre l'état (Paris, 1910), p. 4. The idea that syndicalism was "rescuing" Marxism and/or socialism is strongly articulated in the literature. Griffuelhes told delegates to the 1907 International congress held at Paris that syndicalism seemed to be "carrying socialism toward a renaissance." Reported in Hubert Lagardelle, et al., Syndicalisme et socialisme (Paris, 1908), p. 3. The same idea was expressed by delegate Klemczynski at the 1912 meeting of the CGT. He said that syndicalism was "of pure essence Marxist, and a regeneration, a renaissance of socialism." Quoted in XVIII(e) congrès national corporatif (XII(e) de la C.G.T.) . . . Compte rendu des travaux (Le Havre, 1912), p. 113.

4. La Voix du Peuple, 28 July 1901.

5. Pouget in Robert Goetz-Girey, La pensée syndicale, p. 57.

6. XI(e) congrès national corporatif (V(e) de la confédération générale du travail . . . ) (Paris, 1900), pp. 116-117.

7. Le Libertaire, 18 Jan. 1903.

8. Marc Pierrot in Griffuelhes, et al., Syndicat et syndicalisme, p. 8.

9. The literature is full of discussions on the effectiveness of the small cadre of unionized workers. Louis Meyer noted that the use of direct action actually swelled the unions' effectiveness by keeping "society in a constant disorganization." La crise du syndicalisme (Paris, 1909), p. 12. Shoemaker Bernard Capjuzan redefined the nature of beneficial membership in 1900. The French temperament was moved to action only when it could count on numerical strength, so membership was important. But the recruits to the CGT must be those possessing a "militant commitment" to the cause. XI(e) congrès [Paris, 1900], pp. 113-114. Others noted that syndicalism's strength lay in the distribution of membership as well as in the degree of commitment. In 1913, for instance, 80 percent of the



workers in the critical industries of baking, building, electrical, and industrial trades were purportedly unionized. Dufour, Le syndicalisme et la prochaine révolution (Paris, 1913), p. 142. The theme of the union as a guiding force was noted by Raymond Joran, who wrote that unionized workers were "skeletons around which the masses congregate during a conflict." But when the crisis passed, "the effects are like snow in the sun." L'organisation syndicale dans l'industrie du bâtiment (Paris, 1914), p. 98. The foes of unionism were not lulled by the diminished membership. Joseph Guérin cautioned that "To evaluate numerically is to evaluate superficially. There are other things more powerful than number. A minority of men of action, disciplined and deciding to have recourse to violence is stronger than men of peace." Le syndicalisme et la propriété (Paris, n. d.), p. 22.

10. Fernand Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses du travail (Paris, 1902), p. 91.

11. La Voix du Peuple, 8 Sept. 1901.

12. Ibid., 24 Feb. 1901.

13. Victor Griffuelhes, Léon Jouhaux, eds., Encyclopédie du mouvement syndicaliste (Paris, 1912), pp. 14-15.

14. Lagardelle, et al., Syndicalisme et socialisme, p. 44.

15. IX(e) congrès de la fédération nationale des bourses du travail . . . Compte rendu des travaux du congrès (Toulouse, 1897), p. 33.

16. Lagardelle, quoted in Sylvain Humbert, Le mouvement syndical (Paris, 1912), p. 82.

17. Dufour, Syndicalisme et la prochaine révolution, p. 154.

18. Arthur Danrez, Vérités syndicales (Paris, 1908), p. 15. This red-bound book on "syndicalism's truths" is similar to the format later used by Chairman Mao. Peter Stearns contends there were "lost opportunities in strikes" because there were not enough union leaders to go around. Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor: A Cause Without Rebels (New Brunswick, 1971) p. 74. However the small bureaucracy was in keeping with libertarian desires. And a small number of permanent officials represented an important savings for a chronically poor organization.

19. Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses, p. 262.

20. Noted in Griffuelhes, et al., Syndicat et



syndicalisme, p. 7.

21. La Guerre Sociale, 6 May 1908.

22. Le Libertaire, 4 Mar. 1900.

23. Ibid., 5 Aug. 1900. André May recaps Georges Sorel's argument as to why anarchists entered the unions. He concludes that anarchists tired of hearing "the same grandeloquent maledictions hurled against capitalism, and wanted to find a way to conduct themselves in really revolutionary action." Anarchists believed the syndicats were instruments of social revolution. Les origines du syndicalisme révolutionnaire (Paris, 1913), p. 102.

24. Le Libertaire, 11 May 1902.

25. Ibid., 29 Mar. 1902.

26. Ibid., 2 Sept. 1906.

27. Lagardelle, et al., Syndicalisme et socialisme, p. 8.

28. Confédération Générale du Travail, La crise du syndicalisme et l'action de la C.G.T. (Lille, 1921), p. 8.

29. Edouard Dolléans, Le caractère religieux du socialisme (Paris, 1906), pp. 2, 4, 22, 23 for quoted material.

30. C[élestin] Bouglé, Syndicalisme et démocratie (Paris, 1908), pp. 90-91, 200-201.

31. Meyer, Crise du syndicalisme, pp. 36, 42.

32. Auguste Keufer, La crise syndicaliste (Aurillac, 1910), p. 17 for quote.

33. Gaston Gros, Le contrat collectif et le syndicalisme (Paris, 1910), pp. 42-43 for quotes.

34. [Henri] Ghesquière, [Adéodat] Compère-Morel, L'action syndicale (Lille, 1911), pp. 22, 29 for quotes. Commenting on the political rhetoric of the socialists, Alphonse Merrheim noted that whenever Ghesquière or Compère-Morel spoke, it was not to defend the working class, but to safeguard municipal elections for the Socialist Party. XVIII(e) congrès [Le Havre, 1912], p. 132.

35. Arthur Clay, Syndicalism and Labour (London, 1912), p. 107.

36. Judith F. Stone, The Search for Social Peace:



Reform Legislation in France 1890-1914 (New York, 1984), pp. 84-85.

37. Michelle Perrot, Les ouvriers en grève, France 1871-1890, 2 vols. (Paris, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 71, 150. Stearns draws opposite conclusions from Perrot, noting that from 1910 to 1914, French workers enjoyed a rise in real wages, while Perrot maintains that 1910-1913 were years of high inflation and lowered real wages. The prosperity, according to Stearns, tended to temper workers' radicalism. Stearns, Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor, p. 79.

38. Perrot, Les ouvriers en grève, vol. 2, pp. 424-425.

39. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 440-443. Quote appears on bottom of p. 443.

40. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 435-438. Quote appears on p. 438.

41. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 496-497.

42. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 499.

43. Aristide Briand quoted in Jacques Julliard, Fernand Pelloutier et les origines du syndicalisme d'action directe (Paris, 1971), p. 63. His italics.

44. Humbert, pp. 23-31 for a discussion of the general strike at the Nantes congress. See 6(me) congrès nationale des syndicats de France. Compte rendu des travaux du congrès . . . (Nantes, 1894), pp. 24-40.

45. IX(e) congrès [Toulouse, 1897], pp. 110-116.

46. XI(e) congrès [Paris, 1900], pp. 106-124.

47. Ibid., pp. 107-108.

48. Paul Delesalle, L'action syndicale et les anarchistes (Paris, 1901), pp. 7-8.

49. Griffuelhes, quoted in André Marchal, Le mouvement syndical en France (Paris, 1945), p. 39.

50. Paul Delesalle, La grève (Paris, 1900), pp. 11-13.

51. La Voix du Peuple, 5 July 1903.

52. Louis, Syndicalisme contre l'état, p. 224.



53. Pouget quoted in Rudolph Rocker, Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice (London, 1938), p. 127.
54. Keufer quoted in Goetz-Girey, La pensée syndicale, p. 223.
55. La Voix du Peuple, 1 May 1905; Jules Cazalis, Syndicalisme ouvrier et évolution sociale (Paris, 1925), p. 70.
56. Griffuelhes quoted in J[acques] Rennes, Syndicalisme français (Paris 1948), p. 134.
57. Dufour, Syndicalisme et la prochaine révolution, p. 138.
58. Congrès régional corporatif [Auxerre, 1907], p. 15.
59. La Voix du Peuple, 14 July 1901, 15 Dec. 1901. Quote appears in first issue cited.
60. Ibid., 4 Jan. 1914.
61. Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses du travail, p. 79.
62. XVIII(e) congrès [Le Havre, 1912], p. 69.
63. La Voix du Peuple, 4 Dec. 1910.
64. Ibid., 30 Jan. 1910.
65. Syndicalist newspapers urged workers to learn Esperanto, a language purportedly easy to learn. A common language among the world's proletariat, many believed, would heighten class solidarity and better prepare the ground for the general strike. Further, proponents suggested what they believed was the practical immediate consequences of speaking Esperanto: during periods of high unemployment in one country, workers could easily emigrate to other nations where work was abundant. Le Libertaire, 30 Apr. 905; La Voix du Peuple, 13 Jan. 1901, 23 Feb. 1902, 10 Sept. 1905, 5 Dec. 1909.
66. Albert Choppé, Le label (Paris, 1908), p. 240. See also Confédération Générale du Travail, La confédération générale du travail et le mouvement syndical (Paris, 1925), pp. 65-66.
67. Series appears in La Voix du Peuple, 14 Apr. 1901, 28 Apr. 1901, 12 May 1901, 16 June 1901.
68. Ibid., 7 Sept. 1902.



69. Ibid., 4 May 1902.

70. The newspaper Le Libertaire, edited by Sébastien Faure, often carried accounts of all the suicides and deaths by starvation in order to heighten consciousness of the corruption and lack of humanity intrinsic to the bourgeois regime.

71. The CGT opposed the retirement legislation because workers were required to contribute. Their opposition reflected their constituents' antipathy toward the measure, since over three-quarters of the workers considered the plan a swindle and refused to join. Georges Dupeux, French Society 1789-1970, Peter Wait, trans. (London, 1976), p. 177.

72. XVIII(e) congrès [Le Havre, 1912], p. 124.

73. Lagardelle quoted in Cazalis, Syndicalisme ouvrier, p. 82.

74. Pouget quoted in Pierre Paraf, Les formes actuelles du syndicalisme en France (Paris, 1923), p. 50. Paul Delesalle was less convinced of the efficacy of the partial strike. He noted that while immediate gains might be forthcoming in a partial strike, the costs of any reforms ultimately would be passed along to the working-class consumer. La grève, pp. 14-15.

75. Jouhaux noted that reform must be considered "not only by the immediate realization that it will bring about, but by the transforming ends [they] carry within [themselves]." Quoted in Maxime Leroy, Les techniques nouvelles du syndicalisme (Paris, 1921), p. 146.

76. Eugène Fournière quoted in Griffuelhes and Jouhaux, eds., Encyclopédie du mouvement syndicaliste, p. 16.

77. La Voix du Peuple, 26 Mar. 1905.

78. Ibid., 5 Apr. 1903.

79. Ibid., 16 Aug. 1903.

80. Articles ran in subsequent issues of Le Libertaire beginning 21 Nov. 1903 and ending on 1 Jan. 1904. Urbain Gohier's and Louise Michel's responses appear in the first number.

81. Ibid., 13 Sept. 1903.

82. Ibid., 27 Sept. 1903.



83. Paul Delesalle, Les deux méthodes du syndicalisme (Paris, 1903), pp. 2-5.

84. Victor Griffuelhes, Voyage révolutionnaire (Paris, 1911); see particularly pp. 9, 22-23, 58. Former Guesdist Léon Robert criticized an officer of one bourse for running in the 1910 election because union comrades, reflecting "all colors of the political rainbow," might be driven off at the example of a bourse official seeking public office. Voix du Peuple, 11 Sept. 1910.

85. *Ibid.*, 15 June 1902.

86. XI(e) congrès [Paris, 1900], p. 118.

87. See Humbert, Le mouvement syndical, p. 81; Lagardelle, et al., Syndicalisme et socialisme, quotes on pp. 38, 45.

88. André Saulière, La grève générale: De Robert Owen à la doctrine syndicaliste (Bordeaux, 1913), p. 177.

89. La Guerre Sociale, 19 Dec. 1906.

90. XI(e) congrès [Paris, 1900], p. 122. Even Aristide Briand, defender of the notion of the general strike in 1892, cooled to the idea once he was elected to the government. On the eve of his entry into the Chamber, Briand told his constituents that he was seeking a politics of détente for all citizens because "there is no prosperity in strikes." Reported in Georges Michon, La préparation à la guerre: La Loi de Trois Ans 1910-1914 (Paris, 1935), p. 10.

91. La Voix du Peuple, 1 May 1902. The notion that government was impotent was expressed by E. Anthony, who noted that in 1899, 84 strikes were declared to force employers to abide by existing legislation regarding accidents at work. Laws were obviously "dead letters" because the government was unable to enforce them. *Ibid.*, 27 Jan. 1901.

92. Lagardelle in Cazalis, Syndicalisme ouvrier, p. 49.

93. Dupeaux, French Society, pp. 12, 155-162 notes that 1872-1911 were years of rural exodus of the young to the towns and cities. A letter from some bootmakers to the 1880 regional workers' congress in Bordeaux noted that most workers could not read: thus, illiteracy was one reason for their indifference to organization, they maintained. Congrès ouvrier régional de Bordeaux . . . (Bordeaux, 1880), p. 9.

94. La Voix du Peuple, 14 Oct. 1906.



95. Berth quoted in Humbert, Le mouvement syndical, p. 46.
96. Paul Delesalle, Les deux méthodes du syndicalisme, p. 15.
97. Noted in C.G.T., La crise du syndicalisme, p. 44.
98. Pouget in Roger Picard, Le mouvement syndical durant la guerre (Paris, 1928), p. 31.
99. Léon Jouhaux, Le syndicalisme français contre la guerre (Paris, 1913), p. 19.
100. Annie Kriegel, "Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire et Proudhon," Le pain et les roses (Paris, 1968), p. 49.
101. Jouhaux, Le syndicalisme français contre la guerre (Paris, 1913), p. 32 (his emphasis).
102. Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France 1830-1968 (Cambridge, 1974), p. 193.
103. La Voix du Peuple, 4 July 1909.
104. XI(e) congrès [Paris, 1900], p. 113.
105. Louis, Syndicalisme contre l'état, p. 230.
106. Shorter and Tilly, Strikes in France, pp. 102, 145.

#### PERSONS CITED

Antignac, Antoine (1864-1930), born in the Corrèze of a poor family. Began his career as a militant in the POF, then joined the bourse. He was befriended by Sébastien Faure and worked on several papers. He was often arrested for his militant anarchist activities, particularly when important persons came to Paris. Married, with a family.

Beaupérin, Pierre (?-?), a shoemaker and secretary of the Rennes bourse. Involved in the founding of the CGT.

Bes, Rémy (1872-?), born in the Cantal. He was a precision instrument maker and treasurer of his union. He was mobilized in 1914 to a war plant. From 1916 to the armistice, he participated on a committee to reestablish international relations.

Boulé (?-?), a woodcutter from the Nièvre. Noted for making "cerebral revolution" in his unions during the 1890s. He



joined the excavation workers in Paris. He supported the principle of the general strike at the FNS meeting in 1888. He was also involved in the CGT.

Bourchet, A. (1869-?), was an officer in the leatherworkers' federation. A Blanquist, he was a remarkable debater and often spoke in support of the general strike at CGT congresses. In 1916 he participated in the minority action against the war, but abandoned that position until after the armistice, when he then sided with Marty and others involved in the Black Sea mutiny.

Braun, Joseph (?-?), a mechanic, married, with two children. He was an Allemanist and became a secretary in the metallurgists' federation. He belonged to a compagnonnage, and was a member of the general strike committee.

Briat, Edouard (1864-1948), cooperator, syndicalist, and socialist. In 1895 he was instrumental in founding a cooperative of precision toolmakers. Participated in CGT congresses.

Capjuzan, Bernard (1855-1912), born in the Basses-Pyrénées, died in Paris. A shoemaker, member of the shoemakers' federation and of the Paris bourse. He supported the Guesdists as opposed to the possibilists. Attended the 1899 meeting of the International. Capjuzan edited numerous labor journals and supported the principle of the general strike.

Cleuet, Auguste (1876-1956), born in the Nord and died in Paris. Worked in a bank after his military service. He was involved with the unity movement within socialism while also involved in unionism. As secretary of the Amiens bourse, he was active in gaining legislation outlawing night work for bakers. He was also involved with cooperatives. He was mobilized during the war.

Danrez, Arthur (?-?), diamond worker and militant in the Federation of the Jura. In 1908 he joined the SFIO. That year he was fired from his post as assistant to the socialist mayor of his town for putting up anti-Clemenceau posters. He pursued political, cooperative, and syndicalist action simultaneously. He supported Jouhaux and the majority during the war.

Delesalle, Maurice Paul (1870-1948), born in the Seine-et-Oise, and died in Paris. His mother was a seamstress, his father a machinist. Studied at night school to become an industrial draftsman and toolmaker. Moved to Paris, where he became active in anarchist and socialist groups. He became an officer in the FBT and the CGT. He was always on the left: supporting the general strike, agitating for the eight-hour day, and opposing reformists.



He was instrumental in drafting the Amiens charter. He worked for a time on Jean Grave's Temps Nouveaux, and was arrested in 1907 for his protest against the government's use of troops in the Midi. In 1908, with the help of a friend, Delesalle opened his own bookstore and resigned from the CGT. His shop became a foyer for leftist intellectuals. He collaborated with many people in publishing syndicalist literature. He supported Jouhaux in 1914, but later joined the Communist Party.

Dret, Henri (1875-1941), born in the Dordogne, died in the Seine-et-Oise. A shoemaker who became secretary general of his federation, he was very active in the CGT and organized many farmworkers' unions in 1906. He was involved in a demonstration against the firing on striking farmworkers at Draveil in 1908, and had his right arm amputated as a result of wounds sustained there. He was listed on the Carnet B, but rallied with the majority in 1914. He was an early member of the POF, then went through an anarchist phase, returning to party socialism later in his life.

Faure, Auguste Sébastien (1858-1942), born in the Loire, died in the Charente-Inférieure. Born of middle-class parentage, he was educated by the Jesuits, served in the military, and lived in England for a time. He returned to France and moved from Catholicism to socialism. Married and divorced. Under Elisée Réclus' influence, he became an anarchist. He was sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in 1895 for his terrorist activities, but was subsequently granted full amnesty. He was a pacifist during World War I.

Fournière, Eugène (1857-1914), born at Paris of working-class parents; died in the Seine. At the age of eleven he became an apprentice to his jeweler uncle in Paris. He continued his education by reading at the Bibliothèque Nationale. He was first attracted to Guesdism, then Millerandism. He joined the SFIO in 1905 and remained a party faithful to his death. He was subsequently elected a Municipal Councilor in Paris, and then a deputy from the Aisne in 1898. He was attracted to socialism rather than syndicalism.

Gérard, Henri (?-?), lived in Paris. He represented Parisian teamsters at the CGT congresses, and was a member of the Committee of the General Strike.

Gohier, Urbain (1862-1951), born in Versailles (Seine-et-Oise) and died in the Cher. He obtained a degree in law. He was involved with antimilitarism and was sentenced to prison for his activities. He collaborated on Le Libertaire. During World War II he supported the Vichy government.

Grave, Jean (1854-1939), born in the Puy-de-Dôme, died in the Loiret. His father moved the family to Paris, where



Jean was educated in a Catholic school. He apprenticed as a mechanic at the age of twelve, then learned the shoemaking trade. After his military service, he became involved in political activity and, anarchism. Thereafter he concentrated his efforts on spreading the anarchist message through his paper, the Temps Nouveaux. He was an antimilitarist, although he publicly rallied to the Union sacrée during the war. He was twice condemned for his antigovernmental activity: once for his protest against the shootings at Fourmies in 1891, and later for charges of anarchist terrorism. He was acquitted each time.

Guérard, Eugène (?-?), a reformist and secretary general of the railroad workers.

Klemczynski, Ernest (1876-1930), born in the Oise, died in the Jura. Father was a railroad station master. Ernest became a draftsman for a railroad company and was one of those who later formed a union. He was also a political socialist. He attended the CGT congresses, wrote for numerous working-class newspapers, and was an untiring propagandist for socialism. He supported the First World War and remained with the minority SFIO after the schism.

Lavigne, Félix (1851-1930), born and died in Bordeaux. He collaborated in the creation of the first bourse at Bordeaux. He was a Guesdist, participated in the International, and argued against the general strike at Nantes. He was part of the Guesdist cadre to leave that meeting, and he participated in unionism thereafter on a local level. He was an important member of the SFIO until the schism in 1920. Married, with two children.

Luquet, Alexandre (1874-1930), born in the Cher, but came to Paris as a small child. He was a hairdresser who became part of the first rank of the CGT, although he never broke his link to the Socialist Party. He was opposed to proportional representation, and remained with the syndicalist majority after World War I.

Magré, Jules (?-?), lived in Toulon, and was a bourse member.

Meyer, Louis (?-?), lived in Paris. Delegate to numerous CGT congresses.

Michel, Louise (1830-1905), born in the Haute-Marne, died in the Bouches-du-Rhône. Militant Communard who was jailed and exiled for her militancy. After her amnesty she devoted her time to anarchism and conducting demonstrations supporting striking workers.

Niel, Louis (1872-1952), born in the provinces, died in Corsica. Café worker, then typographer at Montpellier. Served in the military. He was an anarchist, syndicalist,



and officer in the bourse. He was a force in getting the FBT to join the CGT. He was also involved with organizing farmworkers. He became a reformist in reaction to Yvetot's antimilitarism. He was elected general secretary of the CGT in 1909, but left that post after a strike of postal workers was checked in the wake of Niel's call for a general strike. He became a proofreader, and later joined the SFIO. After that he served as an agent for the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers and worked in the mayor's office.

Pédron, Etienne (?-?), born 1849 in the Loire-Inférieure. An artisan clockmaker and employed in the mayor's office, he was a pioneer of socialism in the Marne. He spent more time propagandizing than working, although he had a large family to support. He was involved in agitation among farmworkers and helped draft the agrarian program of the POF. He was a vivid orator and organized socialist theatrical troops, writing part of their repertoire.

Pierrot, Marc (1871-1950), born in the Nièvre, died at Paris. From his days as a medical student he was interested in anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism.

Raymond, Adolphe (?-?), born in the Allier in 1843. He was a bookbinder and militant syndicalist. He was involved in numerous areas in spreading the syndicalist message among the miners. In 1901 he became the secretary of the Dijon bourse.

Robert, Léon (?-?), originally from the Pas-de-Calais. Involved in syndicalism in its earliest stages, representing gas employees and printers in the 1900 CGT congress. He was on the committee of La Voix du Peuple and directed the CGT in 1908 when secretaries Griffuelhes, Yvetot, and Pouget were arrested.

Tabard, Etienne (?-?), lived in Paris. He represented numerous congresses of the CGT. He was a secretary of the male store workers' union and a member of the general strike committee.

Torton, Léon (?-?), a hairdresser, born in 1884. Sentenced to prison in 1906 for putting up placards. The next year he was jailed when police found explosives in his home. He was jailed again for hitting a police commissioner during a demonstration of railroad workers. In 1911 he received another prison sentence for his antimilitarist activities.

Treich, Edouard (1860-1929), born in Limoges, died in Bordeaux. He was a porcelain worker and secretary of a bourse. Supported the general strike as long as it was identified with the social revolution. He was also a militant political socialist and was a candidate in numerous elections. Treich served as a delegate to numerous union congresses.